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ABSTRACT

The state of Oklahoma sought to determine the effectiveness of its entry-year assistance committees which were designed to help beginning teachers. The study also assessed the contribution of the committees to the improvement of teacher education programs and their contribution to the induction of new teachers. The survey instrument consisted of: (1) three general questions concerning the overall success of the committees; (2) logistical and procedural questions as to the effectiveness of selected program components; (3) discernible further development by first year teachers of selected knowledge bases, skills, or competencies identified as important by educators; and (4) improvement by first year teachers in selected areas of Oklahoma's standards for teacher education. In this report, data results from 249 responding educators are analyzed for each of these sections of the survey and results are also presented in tabular form. It was concluded that the program achieved an unusual number of the stated objectives and higher education faculty made a significant contribution to the success of the program. Recommendations are made on areas upon which further follow up studies should focus. (JD)

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at
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January 30, 1984

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First Year Evaluation Results
From
Entry-Year Assistance Committees

On June 10, 1980, Governor Nigh signed into law H.B. 1706. This comprehensive piece of legislation contains four major concepts affecting teacher education. These concepts are: (1) Strengthening the screening requirements of college student applicants for admission into college and university teacher education programs: (2) Testing teachers in their curriculum field, (3) Development of Entry-Year Assistance Program for beginning teachers, and (4) Staff development programs in all school districts.

A review of the professional literature indicates that Entry-Year Assistance Committees designed to help teachers during their induction into the teaching profession is long overdue. Recent studies by Ryan, 1979, and Fisher, 1979, indicate this is an area of teacher education that is being evaluated in several countries. The induction of teachers into the profession has been the focus of several studies in Australia and Great Britain. Fisher reports that Australia recognizes the need to support and assist first year teachers and has recently completed a national teacher induction project which identified induction as a critical phase of teacher preparation. Additional research and development must be completed before the full potential of people entering the teaching profession will be realized, according to Fisher.

Hall, 1982, defines induction as the transition between graduation from a teacher education protram and the onset of inservice teaching. Studies in Oklahoma indicate a significant number of new teachers dropout of the profession within 5 years. Some writers believe this high dropout rate can be attributed to lack of support and assistance for the new teachers at a time when they are trying to establish themselves.

Historically, education spends very little on research and development of new programs. Ryan, 1979, states that in order to work toward more education and support for beginning teachers, conceptual changes based on sound research must occur. New entrance models for beginning teachers must be established. Colleges of Education and public schools must work together to provide support and inservice for the new teacher.

Hall, 1982, indicates that at the present time in the United States, the induction phase of teacher education is not recognized by state educational agencies, professional organizations, accreditation bodies or teacher education institutions. That statement is not true for Oklahoma today. Oklahoma is presently completing the second year of entry-year assistance committees and data is being collected to identify the contribution this new program can make to improve teacher education programs.

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of Central State University's program and to determine if Entry-Year Assistance Committees made a significant contribution to the induction of first year teachers into the profession. Entry-Year Assistance Committees were required for all first year teachers in Oklahoma during the 1982-83 school year and Central State University faculty members served on 128 committees with some faculty members serving on as many as 4 separate committees.

DATA COLLECTION

The survey instrument was divided into four parts: 1. Three general questions concerning the overall success of the program, 2. Logistical and procedural questions as to the effectiveness of selected components of the program, 3. Discernible further development by first year teachers of selected knowledge basis, skills or competencies identified by professionals as important for educators, and 4. Improvement by first year teachers in selected areas from the state standards for teacher education. Data collected in the survey was to be used as part of a state-wide evaluation and to provide feedback to Central State University relative to changes that would improve the 1983-84 program.

The survey instrument was delivered by the higher education member on the Entry-Year Assistance Committee at the last Committee meeting in April, 1983. The responses were mailed in by committee members and first year teachers on an anonymous basis.

DATA ANALYSIS

A total of 249 responses were received which constituted a 60% return. The responses received were divided among committee members as follows: entry-year teachers 23.7%, teacher consultants 26.5%, school administrators 24.9%, and higher education 24.9%.

Data was organized by the number of responses of committee members according to type of license held by first year teachers. It was important to determine if entry-year assistance committees were more effective at certain levels of teaching.

PART I

Table 1 includes data from the first three questions that concerned the overall effectiveness of the program. These questions were designed to allow everyone involved in the program to exercise their professional judgement in evaluating the program.

Question 1: A total of 245 committee members responded and 96% checked agree or strongly agree that the program was effective in helping first year teachers. It is important to point out that the results are consistent from all committee members and first year teachers. For a new educational program to receive this type of approval during the first year of operation is unusual.

Question 2: Results indicate consistency in responses from all committee members with 94% of all respondents indicating the process will result in teachers who are better prepared. This question encompasses the main objective of entry-year committees, better prepared teachers.

Question 3: Better communications among all parties concerned in pre-service teacher education was an important component of the Entry-Year Assistance Committee concept. It was encouraging to see that all three questions received very positive responses and to see the consistency of responses from all committee members. A total of 94% of all returned survey forms indicate that the program will result in better communications and working relationships among higher education, school administrators and classroom teachers.

TABLE I

Number of Responses by Committee Members
According to Type of License Held by
First Year Teacher

License	Higher Educ.	Administrators	Teacher Consultant	1st Yr. Teacher	Total Responses
K - 12	21	13	20	19	73
Elem.	27	26	24	24	101
Sec.	14	23	22	16	75
TOTAL	62	62	66	59	249

Question 1 Overall, the Entry-Year Program has been effective in assisting first year teachers . . . . . .

*SD	1	0	0	0	1	
* D	2	2	3	2	9	
* A	24	25	32	37	118	>96%
*SA	35	33	31	17	116	
*NI	0	0	0	1	1	
Total #	62	60	66	57	245	
Percentage	25.3	24.5	26.9	23.3	100	

Question 2 The Entry-Year Committee process will result in teachers who are better prepared . . . . . .

SD	1	0	0	1	2	
D	1	4	2	4	11	
A	27	26	43	36	132	>94%
SA	32	28	21	17	98	
NI	1	1	0	0	2	
Total #	62	59	66	58	245	
Percentage	25.3	24.1	26.9	23.7	100	

Question 3 The Entry-Year Committee process will result in better communication and working relationships among Higher Education, School Administrators and Classroom teachers . . . . . .

SD	3	0	0	0	3	
D	2	3	3	3	11	
A	19	30	43	30	122	>94%
SA	38	25	20	24	107	
NI	0	1	0	1	2	
Total #	62	59	66	58	245	
Percentage	25.3	24.1	26.9	23.7	100	

*SD - Srongly Disagree
* D - Disagree
* A - Agree
*SA - Strongly Agree
*NI - No Information

PART II

There were 13 questions in Part II of the survey and the emphasis was to see if all components of the program had been implemented according to State Department of Education guidelines. Respondents were asked to evaluate whether certain committee members and components in the program had made a positive contribution to the overall effectiveness of the program. Table II indicates that 98% of those responding to Question 4 thought the higher education committee members were very helpful in the committee process. This data is significant since inclusion of a higher education person on the committee came after much debate and some critics of H.B. 1706 are targeting this area as a way to cut the budget.

Questions 6 and 8 reveal that both the teacher consultant and school administrator made valuable contributions to the committee process. Although very positive it should be noted that the administrator received the lowest rating. McBee and Crawford, 1983, in the evaluation of the Entry-Year program in Oklahoma City reported similar results.

Results obtained for Questions 11 and 12 indicate the committees functioned as a team and were well informed. Success in this area might be attributed to the experience gained in the pilot study conducted during 1981-82 and various staff development activities conducted with planning funds made available during the 1981-82 academic year. It should be noted that entry-year assistance committees is a new concept in Oklahoma and it is a tribute to the professionalism of administrators, classroom teacher consultants and faculty members from higher education that they could work so well together during the implementation year of a new program.

Question 13 dealt with how effective the observation instrument was in evaluating first year teacher competencies. The instrument received considerable criticism during use in the pilot study but it received a 94% yes vote of those who responded either yes or no. It appears the strength of the observation instrument is it's flexibility in allowing educators to exercise their professional judgement in most areas. Committee members appeared to help each other in areas that a committee member might not observe in only three classroom visits.

Question 14 addressed "meaningful parental input" in the entry-year process of evaluating first year teachers. A total of 65 respondents replied "no" and 63 replied they did not have adequate information to respond. There were no guidelines issued by the State Department of Education on how to achieve parental input so it was left to each committee to determine how to achieve this objective. Based on data collected it appears that over one-half of all committees did not successfully achieve the parental input envisioned in the original legislation.

Question 16 revealed another area that caused some problems for committee members. Although 88% checked "yes" that an appropriate staff development plan for the entry-year teacher had been recommended it must be pointed out that 33 respondents said they did not have enough information to respond. This area needs more study because the spirit of the legislation was for the committee to assist the first year teacher to outline activities that would enable the first year teacher to continue their professional development.

TABLE II

Effectiveness of Selected Program Components

	YES		NO		NO INFO.
	raw score	%	raw score	%	raw score
4. The suggestions of the higher education person were helpful.	221	98%	4	2%	16
5. The higher education person was present for at least three committee meetings and made at least three observations, ...	242	99%	3	1%	4
6. The suggestions of the teacher consultant were helpful..	226	99%	3	1%	12
7. The teacher consultant was present for at least three committee meetings and was available for the required number of contact hours..	238	98%	5	2%	2
8. The suggestions of the school administrator were helpful	222	97%	8	3%	18
9. The school administrator was present for at least three committee meetings and made at least three observations..	238	97%	7	3%	1
10. The committee began early enough in the teacher's employment..	233	96%	15	4%	1
11. The committee members consulted with each other and functioned as a team..	233	94%	14	6%	2
12. The committee was well informed and had an Entry-Year Assistance Packet at the first meeting.	232	94%	16	6%	1
13. The observation instrument was effective in assessing entry level teacher competencies	226	94%	15	6%	7
14. The committee was able to secure "meaningful parental input".	119	65%	65	35%	63
15. The teacher consultant was able to schedule required time for observation & consultant	213	94%	13	6%	20
16. The committee recommended an appropriate staff development plan for the Entry-Year teacher	184	88%	25	12%	33

TABLE III

Change in Knowledge, Skills or Competencies
During Entry-Year Program

	Responses	Demonstrated at the beginning of the Entry-Year — Percentages			Responses	Acquired or further developed in the Entry-Year Progam — Percentages		
		Yes	No	NI		Yes	No	NI
1. Skill in planning for effective use of limited time (in classrooms, etc.)	229	81	14	5	202	97	2	1
2. Skill in handling discussions.	228	83	10	7	202	95	1	4
3. Ability to outline objectives and organize courses.	231	84	8	8	199	94	1	5
4. Ability to manage discipline problems.	222	74	21	5	206	97	2	1
5. Ability to teach or train others.	224	82	5	13	199	89	2	9
6. Possession of satisfying philosophy of life.	233	82	1	17	188	79	2	19
7. Ability to work with administrators in professional endeavors.	230	92	1	7	198	94	.1	5
8. Sense of professional obligation and ethics.	230	96	1	3	198	96	2	2
9. Command of broad field of knowledge including the major field.	233	90	7	3	194	94	3	3
10. Ability to organize and present ideas to colleagues.	223	76	9	15	198	85	2	13

PART III

Questions in this part address selected areas of knowledge, skills, or competencies that have been identified by professional organizations and professional journals as important for educators. Several respondents did not complete all questions which accounts for the discrepancy in Table III between totals shown for the beginning of the year and those shown for the end of the year. It should be noted that raw scores in the column "NI" or "no information" were included in calculating all percentages.

Question 1 through 5 indicate that first year teachers made significant progress in planning skills, handling class discussions, preparation of unit and lesson plans, management of discipline problems, and the ability to teach or train others. Special note should be made of the amount of improvement in planning and management of discipline problems since these are problem areas mentioned most frequently in studies of first year teachers.

Question 6 looks at entry-year teachers philosophy of life and is the only area in which a decline was recorded. It is difficult to explain this response unless the committee members did not know the entry-year teachers very well at the beginning and their basis of comparison was vague. Also, this area was not part of the committees stated responsibilities outlined by the State Department of Education and they may not have given it much thought until asked to respond on the questionnaire.

Small improvements were recorded on Questions 7, 9, and 10 while no change was recorded on Question 8 which looked at the entry-year teachers sense of professional obligation and ethics. A closer look at areas covered in these questions would seem to indicate that these are areas that a beginning teacher might not have an opportunity to demonstrate significant growth.

PART IV

This section of the survey looked at selected areas taken from the state standards for teacher education and the extent entry-year teachers possessed these competencies at the beginning of the year and how much, if any, improvement occurred during the school year. Table IV reveals significant improvement occurred in all 10 areas included in this section. It appears the most improvement occurred in the areas of understanding human growth and learning, teaching methods, educational materials, media and working with parents. The percentage of respondents who checked number 4 "needs improvement" at the beginning of the year was approximately 6.5% and only 4% at the end of the year. A more positive way of looking at the results would be to indicate that an average of 93.5% of all the first year teachers were scored as adequate or better at the beginning of the school year.

How much improvement in entry-year teacher's competencies can be attributed to entry-year assistance committees is debatable but it did occur and that is important. The retention of outstanding young teachers in the profession should improve as they experience success and grow professionally during their first years of teaching.

SUMMARY

For a new program with no model to follow the Entry-Year Assistance Program achieved an unusual number of their stated objectives. It appears that much of the apprehension expressed by some school administrators prior to program implementation has disappeared and that higher education faculty members made a significant contribution to the success of the program. Lines of communication have developed between teacher educators and practitioners in the field.

TABLE IV

Selected Items From State Standards
for Teacher Education

The following items were selected from the state standards for teacher education. The strength of the skills demonstrated were evaluated at the beginning of the year and at the end of the entry-year.

1. Very Strong
2. Strong
3. Adequate
4. Needs Improvement
5. No Information

	#1 Beginning of Entry-Year (Percentages)					#2 End of Entry-Year (Percentages)				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
11. Knowledge of the processes of human growth, development, & learning.	18	29	43	6	4	31	48	13	4	4
12. Purposes of education	26	41	26	4	3	40	42	10	4	4
13. Characteristics of effective teachers.	21	35	35	7	2	39	44	10	5	2
14. Organization of public schools.	15	28	43	7	7	31	39	19	4	7
15. Educational measurement.	18	31	38	4	9	27	47	14	4	18
16. Teaching methods.	19	37	34	8	2	41	43	9	4	3
17. Educational materials & media.	15	33	39	9	4	32	49	12	4	3
18. Effective interaction with parents.	16	25	34	10	15	30	42	10	4	14
19. Contemporary problems in education.	13	27	46	7	7	24	38	27	4	7
20. Skills to work ethically with pupils and teachers.	26	35	29	6	4	43	42	7	3	5

#1 Based on 236 responses.
#2 Based on 224 responses.

Linkage between faculty involved in preservice teacher education and teachers involved in developing inservice programs improved significantly.

Discussions with committee members seem to indicate that higher education faculty members and public school personnel are only beginning to recognize some of the potential benefits of working together to support and assist first year teachers. The full potential of this program may not be realized until the third or fourth year of operation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Follow-up studies need to focus on the following areas:

(1) How this program has affected retention and continued professional growth of teachers who had the support of Entry-Year Assistance Committees

(2) Needed preservice and inservice program changes

(3) Role of parents in the program

(4) Characteristics of first year teachers who dropout

(5) Coordination with required follow-up evaluation by teacher education programs

(6) Possible changes in the funding procedures

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